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ABSTRACT

Seminars offered by the Planned Parenthood Association of Bucks County (Pennsylvania) are described as sessions which provide encouragement and support to parents in their efforts to talk with their children about sexuality. The content of the free, four-session seminars is briefly described and a contact for further information is given. The remainder of this short document is a pamphlet which is a parent guide for teaching children about sexuality. (EM)

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PARENTS: YES YOU CAN!

"PARENTS: YES YOU CAN!"
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"Parents: Yes You Can!" is a Family Life Education Project sponsored by Planned Parenthood of Bucks County and made possible by a grant from the Pew Foundation, (Glenmede Trust Co.) Through this project, the education staff of P.P.A.B.C. will offer a four session seminar for parents to encourage and support them in their efforts to talk with their children about sexuality. The seminars are free.

We know that sex education happens to our children every day. Children read about sexuality on bathroom walls; they see it used in advertising as a way to sell products; they hear sexuality set to music in pop songs; they see it on television. Given our current social environment, parents do not have a choice about whether children get sex information; parents only have a choice about whether they will participate in the sex education that is already happening to their children.

We know that most parents do want to talk with their children about sexuality; that most parents want to share their values and beliefs about sexual behavior with their childrens. And we know, too, that for most parents, talking about sex with their children is difficult. Parents wonder how to begin, what words to use. Parents worry about their own embarrassment, that their children won't listen. Parents worry about what information is appropriate for their children of different ages.

"Parents: Yes You Can!" can help. "Parents: Yes You Can!" is based on the conviction that sexuality education can happen first and best in the family. "Parents: Yes You Can!" emphasizes that parents can:

- -- Talk comfortably and effectively with their children about sexuality;
- -- Tell their children what they want them to know about their values and beliefs;
- -- Listen to what their children have to say;
- -- Enhance family life.

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During the four session seminar of "Parents: Yes You Can!", parents will have a chance to share common concerns with other parents. They will discuss:

-- Attitude Formation: How do children learn about sex? Why do adults feel the way they do about sex? Where do we get our values about sexuality? How do we learn morality or moral codes?

-- The Facts: What is sexuality? What factual information do we need to know? Where can I get that information? What if my child asks a question and I don't know the answer?

-- Putting It All Together: Practicing the words; dress rehersal for actually talking with children.

The most important aspect of "Parents: Yes You Can!" is the emphasis on parents increasing their ability to share with their children what values and meaning about sexuality the parents have come to cherish. "Parents: Yes You Can!" will help parents counteract the daily deluge of sexual information, misinformation and innuendo that children experience. "Parents: Yes You Can!" will help parents talk with their children about sexuality in an informal, effective, and caring way.

For more information about "Parents: Yes You Can!", to schedule seminar dates, or to arrange a meeting to discuss your parents' special concerns, contact Sally McCormick or Maggi Boyer, 785-4591.

PARENTS: YES YOU CAN!

PARENTS: YES YOU CAN!

Talk comfortably and effectively with your children about sexuality.

Share with your children the values that are important to you.

Listen to what your children have to say.

Enhance and enrich your family life.

Written by
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In fact, you probably have already communicated lots about sexuality with your children...even if you've never said a word.

How???

See how this strikes you...

What is sexuality?

Sexuality is the quality of being either male or female. It means many things: how we feel about ourselves; what roles we play in society; and reproduction. It does **not** mean just how we behave sexually. It is the total of our physical, emotional and spiritual responses, thoughts, and feelings. Sexuality is more **who we are** than **what we do**. Sexuality is a lifelong dynamic learning process. And what does that mean? It means we learn about our sexuality and discover new meaning and knowledge throughout our lives.

What is sexuality education?

Sexuality education is any experience which helps us learn what it means to be a man or a woman in our society. Sometimes this is confusing.

Our society seems to be changing its mind about many issues of sexuality. It's not easy to know what we believe—or what we want our children to know.

But we do know that parents are concerned about this subject. Parents wonder how to begin, what words to use. Parents worry about their own embarrassment, that their children won't listen. Parents worry about what information is appropriate for their children of different ages. And some parents are so worried that they retreat into silence and say nothing. And that's a problem! Because **our children are getting a sex education every day.**

Children read about sexuality on bathroom walls; they see sexuality used in advertising to sell just about any product. They hear sexuality set to music in pop songs. They see it on television.

What does all this mean?

It means: parents don't have a choice about **whether** children get sexual information. Parents can only choose whether or not to **participate** in the sex education that is already happening.

Still wondering how?

How do we help our children learn about sexuality?

By the way we hold and cuddle our children.

By the way we show love and affection in our family.

By the things we encourage our sons and daughters to try to do.

By the way we talk—or don't talk—about sexual subjects.

By the language we use for the reproductive parts of our bodies.

What else can you, a parent, do?

Use "teachable moments." When a sexual issue is raised in your home, use it as an opportunity to share your feelings and values with your children. Is there a T.V. ad you find offensive? Say so. And tell your children **why**. Is there an after school special on pregnancy? Make a date to watch it with your children; then talk about it. Is there a newspaper article about a new study on teen pregnancy? Share it with your family. Talk about it; post it on your refrigerator. What other "teachable moments" can you think of?

Here's a place for your ideas...

1.

2.

3.

Read! Get a book from your library and read about sexuality. The more confident you feel about your knowledge, the easier it will be to talk with your children. But you don't have to have all the answers! It's O.K. to say "I don't know" to a question—especially if you follow up by finding the answer and sharing it, or looking for it together.

Talk! Not just with your children, but with other adults. Find out how other people feel about sexuality and clarify your own beliefs for yourself.

Start discussion about sexuality in your home. It's not fair to wait until children ask a question. We don't wait for them to ask about trains or flowers or the alphabet. Sex is just as important—if not more so! It's not fair to place on a child the responsibility for initiating discussions about sexuality. The responsibility is ours as adults and parents.

Trust yourself! Your values are important. It doesn't matter if you're liberal or conservative. It doesn't matter what other families are doing or saying. It **does** matter that you share those values with your children.

Remember. Think back to your own childhood and teen years. Sift through your memories of the ways in which you learned about sexuality. Did your parents share with you? Did you get most of your information from friends? Did you have any misconceptions about sexuality? What would you change about the way you learned about sexuality to make the learning better for your children?

Follow through! Make a promise to yourself that you'll see to it that sexuality education happens in your family, in your home. **Plan** what you think you can do and when you'll do it. **Talk** it over with other family members. **Gather** the information you'll need and follow through!

Right now, make a promise to your children.

My Promise To My Children

1. I want to talk with my children about sexuality. One way I'll start a discussion is...

2. I want to tell my children how I feel about...

   The way I'll raise this issue is...

3. I'd like to know what information my children already have about sexuality. A way that we can talk about this together is...

4. Today's Date:

   Date by which I will have done at least two of the items:

Still Wondering?

Call Planned Parenthood.

We're committed to the idea that sexuality education can happen first and best in the family—and we'll help you do it! After all, "Parents: Yes You Can!"

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